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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 23 March 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Abelian (Armenia)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

The meeting was suspended at 10 a.m. and resumed at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 117: Pattern of conferences (continued)
(A/53/826, A/53/827 and A/53/833)

1. **The Chairman** proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

"The General Assembly,

"Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States (A/53/826) and the report of the Secretary-General on improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/53/827);

"Decides to transmit the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of economy measures on the delivery of mandated conference services (A/53/833) to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for consideration in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, taking into account the views expressed by Member States."

2. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 118: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (continued) (A/53/11/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1)

3. **Mr. Ayoub** (Iraq) said that the role and recommendations of the Committee on Contributions were technical in nature, and that it was not part of its function to become involved in political matters. It appeared, however, that its refusal to grant the request for exemption submitted by his country, alone of nine such requests, was the result of political factors dictated by one or two of its members, despite the fact that that request had been based on Article 19, which permitted exemption where the non-payment of contributions was due to considerations beyond the control of the country concerned.

4. It was regrettable that some Member States placed their own political interests ahead of the principles and wording of the Charter. Others, in contrast, had rightly recognized that the burdens which his country had to bear were affecting its ability to pay its contributions to the United Nations. Since 1995 his delegation had been

endeavouring by every legitimate means to secure exemption from the application of Article 19 of the Charter until the sanctions were lifted. Those efforts, however, had been thwarted by that same faction, which, for all its incessant prating on about democracy, was bent on denying his country the full exercise of its rights at the United Nations, and was thereby undermining the Organization's credibility.

5. **Mr. Cho Chang-Beom** (Republic of Korea) endorsed the recommendations made by the Committee on Contributions and expressed satisfaction at the Committee's timely and professional work, which was in accordance with the procedure laid down in rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

6. The Republic of Korea supported the strengthening of the application of Article 19 of the Charter and of rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. While it supported the intent of the exemption clause in the case of Member States which, for reasons beyond their control, were not in a position to pay their assessed contributions, given the Organization's current financial difficulties a stringent standard should be applied when considering requests for exemption. Any exemptions should be of limited duration and requests should be reviewed on their merits. The Committee should have access to the fullest possible information when considering requests for exemption.

7. His delegation was concerned at the finding that many Member States regularly paid only just enough to retain or regain their votes. Such a practice did not accord with the Charter obligation of Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

8. **Mr. Etuket** (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions) said that the Committee on Contributions had considered the case of Cambodia on the basis of the information which had been provided by the Government of Cambodia and by the Secretariat, including Cambodia's stated intention to make the necessary payments to the United Nations by June 1999. The Committee had concluded that Cambodia's current failure to pay the necessary amount to avoid the application of Article 19 was due to conditions beyond its control. Accordingly, it had recommended that Cambodia should be permitted to vote in the General Assembly until 30 June 1999.

9. Some members of the Fifth Committee had requested the Committee on Contributions to review certain aspects of the application of Article 19. The Committee would do so at its fifty-ninth session and submit its recommendations to the General Assembly.

10. **The Chairman** proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

"The General Assembly,

"Having considered the report of the Committee on Contributions at its special session, decides:

"(a) That the failure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia and Georgia to pay the amount necessary to avoid the application of Article 19 of the Charter is due to conditions beyond their control and that, accordingly, they should be permitted to vote until 30 June 1999 and that any extension requested should be subject to review by the Committee on Contributions;

"(b) That the failure of the Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras and Nicaragua to pay the amount necessary to avoid the application of Article 19 of the Charter is due to conditions beyond their control and that, accordingly, they should be permitted to vote until 30 June 2000 and that any extension requested should be subject to review by the Committee on Contributions."

11. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

12. **Mr. Niwa** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services), replying to questions raised earlier by delegations, said that the staff of the Office of Central Support Services had checked all the telephones located outside the conference rooms. Two of them bore tags indicating that they were out of order, but were in fact working. The handsets of two other telephones had been found to be missing and had been replaced. While his staff would continue to make periodic checks, it would also be helpful if delegations reported non-working telephones.

13. With regard to complaints that unauthorized vehicles were being parked in those areas of the garage normally reserved for diplomatic vehicles, he apologized for the disruption which the ongoing construction in the garage had caused. Everything possible was being done, however, to minimize the disruption, including the ticketing of vehicles that were parked without authorization. It should also be remembered that some vehicles which belonged to diplomatic missions but did not have diplomatic licence plates had been granted permits to park in the area normally reserved for diplomatic vehicles.

14. The escalators in the Secretariat building had been installed over fifty years previously and, even though they

had been upgraded in compliance with the New York City building codes, they now needed periodic repairs and were therefore taken out of service for short periods each month.

15. The security officer who had been posted permanently in the archives area had been removed because of the increased demand on the resources of the Security and Safety Service. Alternative and cost-effective arrangements had, however, been made to provide security for the area.

16. The staffing table of the Security and Safety Service consisted of 3 Professional staff, 9 General Service staff and 171 security officers. The vacancy rate was 1.5 per cent. Printing costs in the Service were incurred for the printing of such miscellaneous items as inspection tags for fire extinguishers.

17. The canine unit had been introduced at Headquarters in December 1998 on a trial basis, following the delivery of a spate of letter bombs to the Organization. Because of the urgency of the situation, the unit had been contracted on a sole-sourcing basis, as the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had recommended. A competitive bidding process would take place in the near future. The annual cost of the service, which was provided for 10 hours each day from Monday to Friday, was \$150,000. It would cost the Organization \$250,000 per year to provide the same service in-house, since two trained dogs would have to be acquired and two officers who were also explosives experts assigned to them on a full-time basis.

18. Given the sensitive nature of the subject of security, he hoped that any further explanations which delegations might need could be provided on a bilateral basis.

19. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was not satisfied with the explanations just given by the Assistant Secretary-General. The estimate of how much it would cost to provide the canine service in-house, for example, would decline after the initial training period. Also, she had previously been told that the escalators had been replaced since their installation fifty years earlier. It was difficult to know which information was accurate and which was not.

20. **Ms. Emerson** (Portugal) said that the matters currently under consideration should be discussed on a bilateral basis so that the Committee would have enough time to address the substantive items on its agenda.

21. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for his replies to the questions raised by his delegation. He hoped that the issues raised would receive the attention of the Office of Central Support Services on an ongoing basis and not only when specific requests were made by delegations.

22. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation had taken note of the Assistant Secretary-General's explanation that a security officer could no longer be stationed in the archives area because of budget reductions and would take that fact into account during the negotiations on the budget for the following biennium. It would be useful if the Assistant Secretary-General could issue in writing the information which he had just provided.

23. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) said that some of the issues under discussion were best considered in plenary meeting and not on a bilateral basis, as was being suggested. She, too, would find it useful if the Assistant Secretary-General issued in a written document the oral replies which he had just given.

24. **Mr. Niwa** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services) said that new escalators had not been installed in the Secretariat building. He would prefer, where possible, to provide any additional information that members might need on a bilateral basis.

25. **Mr. Jaremczuk** (Poland) thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for his efforts to improve the security situation at Headquarters.

26. **The Chairman** requested the Assistant Secretary-General to make his replies available in writing for the benefit of delegations and reminded members that the Secretariat and Committee were both on the same team. In view of the limited time available, every effort should be made to group issues for discussion in formal meetings under an appropriate agenda item in order to streamline the Committee's work.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.